

Pure Magic

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### Pure Magic

I got this idea after getting a new addiction to Angel/Willow stories from BtVS. I really don't know much about the show so I hope that my portrayal of some of the characters doesn't offend anyone too much.

I don't own BtVS, Joss Whedon, Mutant Enemy, and the "Grr, Argh!" plus the WB does. I also don't own Labyrinth, I just love it very much. Oh, Spike isn't in a wheelchair.

Please, I would love feedback. A very big, heartfelt thank you to all who contribute their opinions, it means a lot to me.

Rated: PG, I guess.

### Pure Imagination

The petite girl stood before the school building, trying to readjust to the lack of pure magic in the air. She was an unusual sight on the streets of Sunnydale this late at night but there was something about her that warned one away while beckoning them nearer. Her hair was hidden under a green fedora but an observant eye could make out a glint of hair the color of pure rubies. After a moment, the young lady walked away, almost wistfully. Already she missed the magic of her homeland, anyone watching could tell that there was deep sorrow in her steps.

A group of men watched her hungrily, smelling her innocent blood mingled with another more potent and powerful smell-one they quite couldn't place. They followed her, already contemplating the easy meal she presented for them. Suddenly a chilly, but amused voice

stopped them in their tracks. "Where do you think you're going?" The young ones turned around in sheer fright and saw a form leaning against the wall, eyes focused on the group in amusement, the darkness covering him like a cloak. His amused grin flashed in the night, their fear the most exquisite elixir to him.

"After her?" One finally squeaked, the others nodded towards the slender redhead who was slowly walking away.

"I see." Angelus remained where he was, his tone revealing nothing to them. "But I could have sworn that I told you, all of you, that the Slayer and her friends were mine." His voice was even, those poor vamps (and I use the term loosely) never knew what hit them. Instant toast. He turned his attention to Willow who had stopped when she saw the sudden flash out of the corner of her eye.

She turned and saw a familiar form standing by the school, surrounded by piles of ash, knowing that they were what was left from a group of vampires. "Angel? What are you doing here? Is there some meeting going on inside?"

Angelus was surprised that she came right over to him, showing no fear. \*Okay, I'll bite. He grinned a little at that thought. "No meeting that I know about. But then Buffy and I aren't on the best of terms right now." \*That's putting it mildly. "I was just walking by, old habits die hard you know, and saw you. Unfortunately, so did these guys." He put a little sadness into his voice, remembering that he was supposed to be soul boy.

Willow knew there was something different about him but couldn't quite put her finger on it. She followed his conversation and looked at what was left of the vampires. "Oh, I had forgotten about the dust bunny problem here. I knew I shouldn't have packed that dust buster." She suddenly noticed his new clothes. "What's with your new look? I mean it's nice, you look incredible but what's changed?"

\*More than you know, little one. "Well, Xander has given up on Buffy, at least for now. He's chasing the Queen." He saw a brief flash of pain dance across her averted face.

She started to walk away from him, going towards her house. "The clothes? I've decided to try to confuse my children with a sudden semi-reappearance of Angelus. And you seem to be avoiding my eyes. Why?"

"Oh, uhm, you noticed that. Of course you did, you wouldn't have mentioned it if you hadn't. It's, well, you see the reason is, eep!" He stopped her and forced her to meet his eyes. \*Think Willow, think! You're supposed to be the smart one!

\*Those eyes! Is she fae? Angelus starred into her eyes, holding her captive. But it was really her strange eyes that held him captive, one was the green found only in the deepest emerald and other was the blue of a deep sapphire found only in dreams. "What's with your eyes?"

She searched desperately for a good reason and blurted out the first thing to spring to her mind. "Contacts. Yeah, that's right. See, I went to the doctor's and he said that I would need corrective lenses. And, considering my extracurricular activities, I decided to go with

contacts." She pulled free and started to move away, quickly. He followed her, keeping pace easily. "I couldn't decide whether to keep my natural eye color or go with a different one, so I'm experimenting. What do you think? Is this too weird for me? But weird is good for Sunnydale, isn't it? In fact, it's almost normal. I mean, I have a Slayer for a friend, plus a watcher, a werewolf, you-a souled vampire, and Xander. Not to mention Cordelia."

They were at her front porch, standing under the bright light. She yawned, then blushed at his amused look. "Sorry. Thank you for saving me back at the school and for walking me home. I'm sorry for talking so much, I'd invite you in but I must do some unpacking. See you." She shut the door in his bemused face and leaned against it with a deep, relieved sigh.

"Quite a talker, isn't she? Not usually the type you go for, mate. But then, your prey never usually gets away either." Spike drawled from the shadows. Angelus turned and saw him leaning against a tree, staring intently into the house as if he could see her through the walls.

"Willow isn't prey, blonde boy, and don't you forget it!" He snarled at his child. "Then what is she? She isn't the slayer." Spike drew near, they started to walk away from the house.

"I'm not sure but I think she's of fae blood, her eyes are natural and her blood smells of pure magic. The last thing I need is to enrage her family, they aren't like humans or even us vampires. They have no weaknesses or scruples, they are truly immortal." He mused. "I wonder if the Slayer knows anything. It shouldn't be that hard to find out, she still thinks that soul boy is still somewhere inside of me." He smirked as they came to the Bronze.

"And if her story about corrective lenses is true?"

"Then I give her credit for quick thinking. But I don't think so. It really doesn't matter though, she's mine." Angelus grinned wickedly at him, "Understood?"

"Of course." But Spike had his doubts, that little girl was stronger than anyone suspected. She just might surprise Angelus. \*One thing's for sure, life would never be dull with Red around.

Willow sighed. "That was too close. Should have asked him not to say anything to Buffy about my eyes." She got up after a moment to make sure he was gone before going upstairs. \*Oh, well. Good thing he never saw my hair. How would I explain that to him? She chuckled and shook out her hair, watching as it sparkled like rubies in the artificial light of bathroom. She then washed her hair and rubbed a duller in it, robbing it of its natural luminescence. It once again returned to its more human dark red color. She crawled into bed and turned out the light, falling into a deep sleep, exhausted from the family reunion.

Angelus came back later that night and watched her sleep, puzzled by the difference in her appearance. Earlier she had seemed to radiate an inner light, yet now she was back to being the shy and quiet Willow he knew. \*What's she hiding? A trip to Buffy's had revealed nothing to him. She hadn't even realized that little Willow had been away. Buffy was rather predictable around. It was pathetically easy

to get information from her, all he had to do was pretend to be that wuss Angel.

He pulled out his sketch pad and began to draw her. She was, even in sleep, an eye catcher. Pretty with her big, green eyes and dark red hair-when she blossomed (to use an older phrase), she would surpass Cordelia and Buffy. So absorbed was he that he didn't even feel Spike come up beside him.

Suddenly their attention was drawn into the room by a flash of light. They watched in amazement the raw power being unleashed in the room by Willow. They watched until the lights faded away, then Spike whistled. "Guess she's fae, mate."

"And very powerful at that." He agreed, his mind still numb from the raw power he'd seen in action. "In all my years, I've never seen or felt anything like that before."

They turned and walked away, knowing that dawn was approaching. They walked in silence for a while, each absorbed in their own thoughts. "What did the Slayer say about her?"

Angelus snorted derisively. "She didn't even realize that young Willow was away, thought she was just doing some extra work for school over this break. She may be distracted by my actions, but this distracted? What lousy taste that Nancy boy had!"

"Can't blame him. This Slayer is stronger and spunkier than most, she is clever and attractive." He pointed out.

"She's a pain who is absolutely clueless about me. Though I do so love to twist her mind about her relationship with Angel." He spat out the name of his former self in disgust. "Honestly, why would he want blondie when Willow has everything we've ever wanted? Beauty, brains, and she's quite unpredictable. One never knows what will come out of her mouth or how she'll react to a situation." Angelus licked his lips gleefully.

"She's also fae and therefore dangerous to your health. How do you think she's going to react when she finds out that you lied to her? That you aren't really her friend Angel?" Spike hated to do it but he had to force Angelus to focus.

"She'd turn me away faster than we can break a neck, maybe restore my soul to bring him back. And from what I could see, she'd be successful. Of course, she might do what Buffy is unable to do, stake me." Angelus grimaced, "unless..." A plan began to form in his mind.

"Unless?" Spike prodded, intrigued by the look on his sire's face. "Haven't seen that look in a long time."

"It's just a half-formed idea right now. The Slayer is going to be away for a few days with the Watcher, some watcher council garbage. Xander is going to be with the lovely Cordelia's family, Willow will be all alone. This will give me sometime to prepare." They raced against the rising sun and walked into the mansion, Angelus's mind already filled with plans for the unsuspecting girl.

Willow stretched and yawned, unaware that she'd been observed by

anyone last night. She got up and dressed, spending most of the day picking up the house and setting it to rights. She remembered engaging in a little battle against the hob goblins sometime during the night. "I have been spending way to much time with the family." She shook her redhead in amusement as she walked to the library.

She sat at her computer and immediately immersed herself in the research, trying to find all the stuff that Giles had asked her to find. She was surprised by one of the research requests. Find the restoration ritual, hmmm. I wonder why, maybe for researching to see if there is some kind of clause. The sound of the town bell brought her out of her self induced 'researcher trance'.

Willow looked up and was shocked to see how dark it was, she quickly finished her task and turned around to leave. Her hasty retreat made her bump into a satin and leather clad figure. The figure easily caught her and brought her near to his body, preventing her from having a nasty fall. She looked up into Angel's eyes and gulped nervously, there was an unfamiliar light in his eyes.

"Hello, Willow." He set her down, almost reluctantly. "Working rather late, aren't you?"

"I got rather involved in researching this stuff and lost track of the time." She gestured around her at the list and books around her. "Guess I forgot that Buffy isn't here."

"A dangerous habit, little Willow. There are all kinds of nasties out in the big, harsh world of Sunnydale that would love a little snack like you." He teased gently, she flushed. He brushed a strand of her hair behind her ear, lightly tracing its shape. She shivered and he smiled slightly to himself. "I'm kidding, sweetling. I'd never let that happen to you." She was avoiding his eyes. Was it self-consciousness because she was attracted or was it the secret of her eyes? He figured it was the first, Willow wasn't stupid. She would not make that mistake and get caught again. Plus, he knew how to play with a woman's heart. Though was it the same with a fae?

He knew he'd have to tread carefully or she'd be spooked, and that was fine with him. Life around Sunnydale was rather dull, Buffy was proving to be more resilient than he thought. Also, that game was fast losing its savor. It was hard to keep up the charade when the girl in question stopped fearing him so much, even her hate wasn't satisfying to him anymore. He noticed that Willow was eyeing the door nervously and pulled himself out of his thoughts before she tried to escape, though chasing her down seemed to be fun too. "Walk you home?" She nodded gratefully and they shut things down before walking out the door. "What were you researching?"

"Various demons and spells. Oh, and the restoration ritual. I guess Giles wants to study it and make sure that you can't lose your soul. I'm not sure how we'd handle that." He had tensed at the mention of the ritual before relaxing as he realized that she still didn't know the truth about his soulless status.

"You don't think the Slayer could defeat Angelus?" He asked, slipping his arm around her waist to guide her and make a claim for the other vampires to see that she was off limits.

"I don't know." Willow was very conscious of his arm around her and how good it felt, how natural. She moved away only to have him snag her hand. After a few attempts to pull away, she relaxed. "She is stronger than most Slayers, that inner strength is her best weapon. Unlike most slayers, Buffy has a firm foundation with her friends. We grant her our strength and talents, it's why she's so successful against her foes. She actually has a real reason, not just an ill defined destiny."

She sighed, unconsciously moving closer to him. "But this wouldn't be just any demon. It would be one who wears a friend's face and form, one who knows her from the inside, has seen how she works. If she could separate the demon-Angelus-from the soul-Angel-she just might have a chance at success. But from what I've studied, Angelus is clever and is way more confident in his skin than Angel is. He knows who he is and what he wants, he's a brilliant actor. And I think I've figured out what is so different about you."

He stopped and pulled her to him, grinning down at her wickedly. "Do I seem different to you, little one?"

She gulped. Her heart raced and she starred up at him with barely concealed fear, realizing her danger seconds too late. "You did lose your soul."

"Honey, I'm home. But then, I'm not the only one keeping a secret, am I?" His hand grasped her chin lightly and forced her to meet his eyes. The fear in her eyes almost made him forgo the quest for truth in exchange for a more pleasurable experience, but he shoved it aside for now. "I said, am I?"

Willow nodded slowly, knowing the charade was over. Her heart rate returning too normal as she remembered just who and what she was. "You caught me, how did you guess?" She decided to toy with him, find out just what he knew.

"Gut feeling. I will give you credit, the story about the contacts threw me but I stopped by your house later that night. Quite a light show you treated me and Spike to."

Willow groaned silently, her senses picked up a dangerous presence before she could speak. With a flick of her eyebrow, she toasted the vampires surrounding them. "Let go or I'll do the same to you." She coldly demanded.

He stepped back, realizing that she was a firebrand. "I just want some answers."

She raised an eyebrow, rather haughtily. "I don't think that you are in any position to question me, boy. After all, you didn't tell me the truth when you first saw me. But I like games, as do you. You want answers, so do I. So..."

She trailed off and walked around him, a calculating look in her green eyes. The silence dragged as she thought and his frustration grew. He restrained himself, knowing that she could easily kill him if the mood struck her. Finally, when he thought his patience would snap, she turned to him. "I'll give you all the answers you want IF you can catch me in thirteen hours."

Angelus almost smiled but stopped. He knew there had to be a catch. "Sound easy enough but it truly wouldn't be a game if there was no challenge to it."

"Oh, you are so right. You have to find me...in there." Suddenly, the world shrunk and shifted. The lights dimmed and then brightened as a large maze appeared over to their left.

Angelus instinctively shielded himself from the harsh light of the red sun, vaguely aware that he didn't burn up. Her gay laughter made him look up at her, almost angrily. "My very dear Angelus, you didn't honestly think that I would let you die before we've had our fun, did you?" Willow smirked at him. "Welcome to my reality."

As he adjusted to the new light, Angelus realized that it wasn't like the sunlight he remembered from before he was changed, nor like the light he avoided. "You don't have a sun down here, do you?" He asked as he glanced around them. The land was rather bare except for the large maze that dominated the landscape. There was a sense of raw power around him that flowed in everything there.

"Nope. Our light is derived from a different plane of existence, none of us is entirely sure how it works. The same with our moon, which you will get a chance to experience since it is midday."

He turned back to her, wondering how he could have missed such an unusual beauty before. In this other world, she glowed with power and authority. Her red hair and unusual eyes were a sight to behold.

"Do I pass inspection?" Willow asked, trying to disguise her nervousness with her blunt manner.

"Breathtaking. Well, you would be if I had any breath for you to take." Angelus responded, his eyes never leaving hers. He saw a flash of awareness in them and the telltale blush before she turned around. "How does this 'hunt' work? What are the rules?"

"Easy." Her voice was all business. "You chase me, you catch me, I answer your questions. Or you chase me, you fail, and we act like nothing happened. You forget my secret and I find out from someone else that you've returned."

He nodded. "And the rules?"

"You have thirteen hours to accomplish this task, only thirteen. You won't need to feed, don't. It makes mother very angry. Don't kill anything here unless you absolutely have to. Do NOT touch ANYTHING in the Bog of Eternal Stench, if you do, you'll smell bad for the rest of your existence. And I mean BAD, you'd stake yourself just to escape it." She waved her hand at the large maze. "That's our playing field. I will not go beyond those walls. Any questions?" She quirked an eyebrow at him.

"I understand perfectly." His tone was even but his look clearly said 'I may be an evil demon but I'm not an idiot.'

"Then let the games begin." She pointed to a large black clock which had thirteen hours on it. "Good luck, Angelus." He could hear the smirk in her voice. She came closer to him and lightly brushed his

lips with hers, before disappearing. "You'll need it." Her voice floated on the breeze, leaving him standing on the hillside in shock. Angelus shook himself out of his trance, still feeling the brief contact of her lips on his. "\*Wow!\*" He headed off towards the maze, the high walls defied him. He studied it for signs of a door or weaknesses in the line, finding none. After an hour of searching, he was beginning to see just how impossible this task really was. But he was not going to give up.

A sparkling set of lights in the bluebells along the outer line of the maze drew his gaze towards them. He cautiously approached, surprised when a delicate Faery flew out to greet him. She was no bigger than his thumb with light blue wings, kind of like a butterfly. She wore a delicate gown shaped like the petals of her home. She had long, flowing hair of vibrant green like spring leaves. Her delicate, childlike face looked up at him with innocent curiosity.

"And who might you be, sweetie? A friend of our dear princess?" Her twinkling, honey tones sounded in his ears.

"You could say that. She's challenged me to find her within the maze but I can't find any openings." He smiled at her. "Do you have any advice?"

"Our princess is one for games, just like her bother, King Jareth. This place is full of openings, it's just you ain't seen them."

"Where are they, Miss?" He followed her as she flew back a few paces, over to a part of the wall that was partially covered in thorns and roses.

"Hyacinth. There's one right in there." She chuckled at his disbelieving look.

"What?" He drew near but couldn't see anything, not a break in the wall nor feel a breeze coming through the area she indicated. "I see nothing there, just roses and thorns."

"Silly one. This is the Underground, things are rarely what they seem to be. Go on." Hyacinth smiled at him, reassuringly.

Angelus debated for a moment, then shrugged. In this world he needed an ally and she did live here, so she should know. He took a deep breath and walked up, preparing for the overgrowth to prick or capture him. He was surprised when that didn't happen and he came out in a serene statuary.

He set off down the path, walking briskly while taking the time to look at the statues. A movement to his right stopped him and he turned to look. "Didn't mean to startle you."

"No harm done, Hyacinth. Did you need something?"

"I can't stay with you. Just wanted to warn you about the statues, they aren't."

With that said, she disappeared over the wall. Angelus shook his head in confusion, the message meant nothing to him. "Worse than



prophecies." He turned back to the path, starting out once more. He noticed after a few minutes that he was passing the same statues that he'd started with. "What the?"

He stopped and walked over to one, touching its face gently, almost like he was touching a fragile flower. His hand was slapped away fiercely and the statues came to life. "What do you think you're doing?"

"Oh, I don't know. Testing a theory that you're nothing more than a bunch of over blown garden ornaments?" Angelus replied, looking bored at the angry group before him. His mind spun in circles as he examined his choices.

One: the statues. They were stone, so he could just smash them but Hyacinth said they weren't statues. That might mean that they only look like stone which means they might not shatter. Two: He could try to outrun them. But, he looked both ways and noticed that the walls had closed off, leaving no where to hide and he wouldn't have a chance to examine for any openings like before.

They didn't give him a chance to fix a definite plan, they moved in on him. He moved off down the path to his left and jumped through an older section of the wall. Instantly, he was plunged into a darkness so thick, you could feel it close in around you. Even with his superior night vision, he could see nothing around him.

After traveling in the darkness for what seemed like hours, he heard a voice in the darkness-one he knew all too well. "Having a little trouble?"

"What are you doing here? I thought you were long gone." The venom in his voice was apparent and the other one tsked him.

There was a smile in the other's voice as he answered him. "If only it was that easy. You never lost me, one does not lose one's soul just because that life is reborn in another form. I'm with you, just not in control. That's the way it should be. It's from me that you get your distinctive personality. Kind of dark in here, don't you think?"

A light appeared in the darkness, revealing Angel. The two starred at each other for a moment. "What's next in this fun house? A visit from Buffy?"

"I highly doubt it. I'm only here because you need me."

"Oh, really? And what makes you think that?" Angelus folded his arms across his chest and looked at Angel.

"Because you don't have the patience to work your way through this, though I have to admit you've been doing rather well."

"Are you daring to suggest the I let you take control of our body? Return to being that pathetic excuse for a creature of the night? No thanks, no game is worth that torture." Angelus started to walk off but was stopped by Angel's hand.

"Come on, you know it was the curse that did that. The gypsies forced an unnatural boundary between demon and soul, putting the soul in

control and giving it an excessive amount of guilt and conscience. That is what we lost. What I'm suggesting is that we become one, join the demon and soul once more. Even you have to admit that you aren't acting like your old self. You've regressed."

Angelus had to admit that his soul had a point, he was acting more like a newbie vamp and not the master he really was. "All right but no brooding, no guilt trips, and, most important of all, NO warm and fuzzy feelings for Buffy."

"That shallow thing? Please. She was just a means to an end, trying to release myself from all that bloody guilt." Angel scoffed.

"I thought that you loved her. At least, that's what it seemed like on my end."

"I was fascinated by her. She was strong-she defeated the master for heaven's sake. She's different from other slayers but she gets on one's nerves the more you get to know her."

"But you figured that she would be the reason I got back into control, the clause."

"No, wish I had." He sighed. "The gypsies are a crafty people but they sure didn't know that they could have made us truly suffer. After all, I still had my dark sense of humor. Plus, having a soul doesn't automatically make someone good. What they should have done was made it impossible for you-I-us to attack a living creature."

"Please! They might hear you and decide to do that." Angelus shuddered. "So, what did you mean?"

"Oh, I figured that helping her fight for the right and all that hero garbage would lift the pressure of guilt. At least that's what Whistler implied it would do."

"The demon with the lousy fashion sense? He's a truly annoying pest." The other man nodded. "I hate that annoying little prick."

"Couldn't agree with you more."

"How does this joining work?"

"Just take my hand and it will be done." They joined hands and suddenly there was just Angelus in the room. He could feel the difference instantly, he felt more complete. Then he left the room to be greeted by Willow. She was sitting on an old fashioned bench. It was gray with a high back and flowers decorated the back of it. There was a tree shading the area, surrounded by a pair of unusual flora.

"Oh, you made it." Willow sounded vaguely disappointed. She had a book in one hand and a glass of peach juice in the other.

"Didn't think I would?"

"Expected you sooner. Oh, well, you have seven hours and twenty-three minutes left." She leapt up off the bench, waved at him, and dashed

between a rapidly closing wall. He heard her laughter float up over the sealed wall "The chase is on!"

Angelus examined the paths around him and decided to go in the opposite direction she had gone in. He found himself in a large maze that was formed by hedges and gray rock walls. After walking for a while, he came upon a series of doors. A red one, brown one, black one, and blue one, he sighed. He turned around but found that his path was blocked by a large elephant shaped bush. "Ok, time to think." \*I really hate this.

"Think? Why think? Just react!" A deep baritone voice sounded in the quiet of the corridor.

Angelus whipped around, looking for around for the one that spoke. "Who said that?"

"I did." The blue door said. "The only way out is to choose one of us."

"Yes, choose." The red one said in a thin, reedy voice. "We have many paths that will take you to faraway corners of the maze."

"But wisely. One of us is a weasel." A distinctly soprano note came from the black door.

"A weasel?" He asked, confused.

"A false path, leads you straight to death." The final door, the brown one said. He had a droll, tired voice.

Angelus had been studying the four doors carefully, checking for special marks or indications that would lead him to Willow. "Which is which?" He mused softly before he approached a white scrap of paper between the brown and the red. He read:

"Ones a false, ones a truth Ones complex, the others straight Doesn't matter which of the four you choose, Only one guards the path you seek. But is it even one of the four? Maybe the solution is right before your eyes, Or not." "That's a false clue. They are all over the place."

"Is not. The princess wouldn't leave one here."

"We're all true paths."

"Except the one that leads to death." Angelus responded.

There was a chorus of denials from the doors but he cut through the din with a sharp whistle. "Which will take me to the princess?"

"We can't answer that." The black door said. "The answer to that is in the riddle in your hands."

Angelus nodded, he hadn't expected any answer from them. He read it again, pulling it apart and focused on one phrase: right before your eyes. He looked in front of him, to the spot where the note had rested. For the first time in over two hundred and forty five years, he saw his reflection staring back at him. Angelus walked through it without hesitation.

The mirror shimmered as he passed through it, then it cleared and he saw a path running through a forest. At first, he thought he was mistaken but then he smelled her on the breeze. He followed it to its source, passing through the thick trees and shrubs.

Willow rested in the glade by the crystal waterfall. Angelus was proving to be a tougher challenge than she'd expected. And, as she watched him through her crystal as he stood in front of the doors, she realized he was quickly closing in on her. "Have to do something about that." She mumbled and set to work.

Willow smiled slightly when her work was done, putting the crystal down. She stirred up a gentle breeze. "Poor Angelus! Whatever will you do now?" Confident that he would be delayed indefinitely, she relaxed enough to take a short nap.

He was walking along, enjoying the evening air and the sight of the crystal moon when the path suddenly dropped from beneath his feet. As he fell, he could see the clock and that he only had two hours left. He plunged into the underground tunnels and lay on the ground for a moment, trying to reorganize his thoughts.

Angelus stood up, slowly, his senses had picked up an enemy presence in the room with him. He was jumped by a warrior wearing black, like a ninja. Angelus flipped the other man, easily knocking him down and delivering the killing blow. "Too easy." He smirked and turned away, but a movement alerted him to the danger and he saw two warriors coming at him. "Oh, great." Again he fought. Again he defeated them and again they multiplied. "This is getting absurd."

Time was ticking away, he could see that by a quick glance at his watch. "Ok, think about it. Every time they die, they just come back." He ducked a blow and spun out of the way, watching as the ninja was attacked by another. "They attack whatever gets in their way! So, I should just get out of the way."

He flipped over one and used his momentum to push it in the way of another. The last four rushed him from all sides, blocking any routes of escape. "What I wouldn't give for a good, long piece of rope." Almost instantly, one appeared before him.

"Ask and ye shall receive." He quoted softly, finding it very ironic but not willing to look a gift 'horse' in the mouth. He climbed up easily, passing through the solid roof without breaking stride. He quickly took stock of his surroundings and found himself by a peaceful waterfall. He also noticed a slight figure resting in the glade beside the waterfall-Willow.

"Napping, Red? Isn't that dangerous?" He asked silkily as he drew near.

She jerked upright at his voice, quickly coming to full awareness. "So, what if I was? You were otherwise occupied, not to mention slow."

He almost had her when she dived into the crystalline pool, swimming rapidly away from him. "Should've guessed." He muttered and dove in after her, quickly matching her strides. She avoided him by weaving in and out of the reefs, using the natural geography to her

advantage.

She then surprised him when she dived lower, heading for the sunken ship below them. He followed as she dove into the wreckage, then she made a ninety degree turn straight up. He lost precious seconds following her, but his unnatural strength allowed him to catch up once again.

He saw her swimming towards a small opening that lead to deeper waters and changed course, cutting her off. She immediately did an about face, heading to the caves. He pursued, catching up to her just as she broke surface in the cavern. She leapt up, pausing only to dry them before running up the path.

Angelus ran after her, only to be stopped by the appearance of a large stone maze and three paths. He sniffed the air but didn't find her familiar scent. He examined the roads around him. The one on his left was well worn, the one in front showed minimal wear. The one on his right was neither used or new, so he trusted his gut feeling and turned towards it.

As soon as his foot touched the ground, the other paths disappeared, reverting back to the cavern. "No turning back now." He quickly ran the distance, a sudden flash of red caught his eye and he grinned, his blood quickening at the thrill of the chase. He followed her through the maze, never letting up. They ended up inside her castle, to be more specific-an Escher Room (named after the artist who did a painting of it) like the one Jareth has.

The suddenness of the change brought Angelus up short. There were staircases going every which way. On the roof, along the walls, standing in the middle of nowhere. But he didn't let it confuse him for long as he saw her moving along the wall under him. With minutes to spare, he leapt off the balcony and landed right beside her. He grabbed her arm just as the clock chimed the thirteenth hour.

Willow smiled, with reluctant admiration. "You win."

"Of course. Now, we talk." He followed her through the room, losing track of the number of times they walked the roof and through the walls. They entered a garden just beyond the throne room, overlooking the entire labyrinth. "It's impressive."

She nodded smugly. "I know. I just can't understand it. No one has ever defeated my maze before." Willow was upset, to say the least. "There goes my hard earned reputation. The faes will all say that I took it easy on you. Oh, well. Guess that means I'll have to abuse my guests with a lot more generosity from now on."

"Easy? Generous? What are you talking about?"

"I can't have my people thinking that I'm going soft just because you made it through." She just shook her head. "I can't believe that you solved it."

He was amused. "If it makes you feel better, I almost didn't."

"And yet you made it. You caught me." sighs. "Guess that means that I have to hold up my end of the bargain." She sat down at the table,

gesturing for him to join her and provided some refreshments for them. "My brother, Jareth, lost his powers, and because I'm his twin, so did I. He was trapped in owl form, I in human."

His sharp whistle stopped her words, "What?" She asked.

"You're going a bit too fast. Start from the beginning." He took a sip of the blood and looked at her, expectantly.

Willow sighed. "If I start from there, we'll be here for centuries. I have a twin brother, Jareth, king of the goblins. He, like me, has a large labyrinth in his domain. His is more complex, ever changing, and growing, it literally lives. What happens to him, happens to me and vice versa. Not that long ago a young girl traveled through his labyrinth."

"If it's as bad as you say, why would she want to do that?"

"She wished her brother away and Jareth gave her a choice. Her dreams or her brother, she choose to save him."

"Why did she wish him away?"

"She was frustrated by his behavior and felt ill used. She said the words, happens a lot more often than people think. They just rarely use the right words. My brother takes away unwanted children and gives them to faes to raise because we can't have children."

"Hold it!" Willow looked at him. "If faes can't have children, how do you explain their existence?"

"The first faes were created from the same source that created the light, Jareth and I are unusual in that we are natural born faes. Something to do with planetary convergence and star alignment. Anyway, Jareth fell in love with her and gave her the power to destroy him."

"Again, why? That's stupid." He couldn't understand how someone with the kind of power he'd seen would just hand over that kind of control to another, and a young girl at that.

"Not if you truly love that person and would do anything, ANYTHING, to make them happy." A new voice entered their conversation, one whose light accent reminded Angelus of Spike.

Angelus turned around and saw a tall, silvery blonde, elegantly dressed gentleman leaning negligently against the door frame. He knew at once that this powerful being was Jareth. Willow's squeal of delight only confirmed it. "JARETH!" She launched herself into his warm embrace.

"Willow! It's good to back." Jareth responded.

"Oh, yeah." They finally parted. "But how'd it happen? One minute I'm walking into the school, worried about the Judge and his anti-humanity campaign, plus Buffy and her disappearing boyfriend. The next, I'm kicking hobgoblin butt to restore order to my kingdom."

Jareth chuckled. "You'd never believe me if I told you but it was

Sarah."

"Sarah!" Willow shrieked, causing both men to jump. "The little girl who caused us to be stripped of our powers in the first place? She is responsible for our return to power? I must remember to...thank her."

Jareth sighed as he recognized the look in her eyes, knowing it meant trouble for his little love. "Sis, you can't punish her. She didn't realize what she had done."

"Spoilsport." She pouted for a moment, then brightened. "May I play with her a little, I won't harm her." She turned and mouthed to Angelus, 'much.'

"No can do." Jareth answered. Her face fell. "If it was up to me, I'd say you could. But this is father's decree."

"Father? Our father? The same being who thinks that slugs evolved from mortals?" "Apparently no one could control the hobs and goblins so he was relieved when she wished for my return to power."

"How did she find out that she destroyed you?"

He smiled, an innocent expression on his face. "I haven't a clue."

"Jareth, you devil! You clued her in, didn't you?"

"Maybe." He drawled, then gestured to her companion. "Who's he?"

Willow gave him a look that told him that she wasn't fooled by his attempt to change the conversation, but she let it slide. "Angelus, he's a vampire. He found out about me, I forgot to disguise my eyes before I returned. I challenged him to a hunt in my maze and he caught me." She scowled at him.

During their conversation, Angelus's mind had been working. "This Sarah, is she the one who made the wish and defeated his maze, stealing his abilities?" They nodded. "I solved yours, what happens to you?"

"Nothing. You didn't wish yourself here, it was a challenge."

"So, you won't lose your powers and position?"

"Nope. Sorry to disappoint you." Her face was blank but her voice clearly said that she wasn't sorry at all.

Angelus laughed without malice, a rare thing for him. "I could easily learn to like you, Willow."

"Do you think that's wise? After all, common sense and my deep loyalty to the gang goes against it."

"I like to live dangerously, young one."

"Obviously." Jareth responded, seeing the look on his sister's face. It was a cross between laughter and shock. "Young one? Does he know

how old you really are?"

"Hey, buster, he's only forty five years older than I am." She put her hands on her hips and glared at her brother. "Speaking of Angelus, I fulfilled my part of the bargain, it's your turn. Why didn't you tell me the truth?"

"In a moment, you have to explain what you were doing in Sunnydale in the first place. After all, Xander did know you from childhood."

She waved dismissively. "We as faes sometimes take an interest in human affairs and Sunnydale had an unusual amount of demonic activity. It was my turn to watch over it and make sure that nothing too deadly happened there. I assumed a human life and lived with my aunt and uncle. They had given up their fae life and powers to stay in the upper realm, where all humans live. Now, spill."

He complied. "As you said before, I like to play games. I wanted to play with you. See if I could..."

"Turn me against the Slayer? Not bloody likely."

"Nope. I was bored, you fascinate me. Even as Angel, you fascinated me. I just wanted to see if I could figure out how that mind of yours works."

"And?" They both asked him, curious to find out what he thought.

"I haven't decided yet." He answered honestly. "What happens now?"

"We return to Sunnydale, I'm committed to help until I graduate. Then I may decide to return here. I don't know what your plans are. I'm sure you'll return to them easily."

"I don't think so, they resulted in the destruction of the world. I somehow doubt that would please you. Besides I think after my experience here, I could find much in mankind to entertain me. Though I won't stop living like a vampire, I might stop killing the innocents I run into. That's what you really brought me here for, isn't it?"

She had an innocent look in her eyes, a confused look on her face but he had the oddest feeling that she was laughing at him. "Why whatever do you mean? I brought you here so we could play, that's all. See you around, Angelus."

He suddenly found himself on the streets of Sunnydale and sighed, he would really have to get to know Willow better. He did so love a challenge.

The End?

End  
file.